

## Delivery Skills so Good You'll Deserve Applause!

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By Gail Zack Anderson, President of Applause, Inc.

By understanding your unique presentation strengths, those intrinsic qualities that never change, you can begin build delivery skills that will set you apart from the crowd.

To find your strengths, listen to what people say about your presentation. Think about which parts of the presentation seem effortless to you. Ask a colleague or a coach to videotape you so you can see for yourself where your unique strengths lie. Maybe you have strengths such as these:

- A strong, warm, or especially expressive voice.
- A friendly smile or an animated face.
- Strong, fluent hand gestures.
- Powerful eye contact.
- A keen sense of humor.
- The ability to put your audience at ease.
- The ability to explain concepts clearly.
  - The desire to help your audience understand.

Once you find your strengths, play them up. For example, if you tend to have wonderful gestures, don't lock your hands together; instead, keep them free so you are more likely to use them. If you have a wonderful, warm smile, don't hide it behind a serious or tense-looking face.

While you are reviewing your videotape, check to see how well your basic delivery skills are serving you. You can use this checklist to evaluate yourself:

- **Stance.** Stand firmly on both feet, so that you look strong, balanced and steady. Be sure your knees are not locked, and that you are not swaying from side to side. If you move around, be sure you move purposefully, and plant your feet whenever you stop moving. Pacing randomly looks like you are anxious or out of control, so make sure your movements are slow and steady.
- **Posture.** Look for a combination of relaxed (but not too casual) and alert posture. Stand tall, with your shoulders relaxed, your rib cage held up from your waist, and your head steady, not tipped, or bobbing. Don't stiffen your spine or your shoulders, or you will appear tense.
- **Hand Positions.** Keep your hands as natural and open as you can, not locked together, or jammed into your pockets. The most difficult position is having your hands relaxed and at your sides; if this is too difficult, try placing your hands lightly together at waist level. Avoid having anything in your hands, if you can.

- Voice. Breathe to keep your voice strong, open your mouth wide enough to improve enunciation. Speak a tiny bit louder and a tiny bit slower than you would one-on-one. Check for distracting habits-clearing your throat or too many "ums".
- Face. Look for facial expressions that reflect what you are saying. When you greet your audience, smile warmly. When you speak of important issues, your face should look concerned but not tense or tight. Watch out for tension in your eyes or eyebrows, or a facial expression that seems frozen.
- Eye contact. Instead of scanning the audience, move your eyes smoothly and steadily around the room, looking at each person in the audience for 3-5 seconds at a time. Guard against darting eyes, and looking at just one or two people. Think of connecting with each person, one at a time.

Use a trusted friend, a coach or videotape feedback to assess your current delivery skills, and then work to build your skills while highlighting your natural strengths. Building presentation skills is a marathon, not a sprint, so take your time, go easy on yourself, and keep moving ahead. With time and patience, you can become a stronger, more effective presenter.

Learn more about [Gail Zack Anderson and Applause, Inc.](#) in our Contributor's section.